



2016/2148(INI)

12.10.2016

OPINION

of the Committee on Transport and Tourism

for the Committee on Regional Development

on Investing in Jobs and Growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds: an evaluation of the report under Article 16(3) of the CPR
(2016/2148(INI))

Rapporteur: Kosma Złotowski

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Transport and Tourism calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes the significant contribution made by the European Structural and Investment Funds to the construction of an up-to-date, efficient, low-emission and safe European transport network; stresses the need for complementarity and better synergies in implementing EU funds to promote combined funding and to increase the leverage effect of EU financial instruments in the transport sector; notes the need to intensify efforts and establish joint monitoring committees to strengthen the synergies between the ESI Funds, the Connecting Europe Facility, the European Fund for Strategic Investments and the H2020 programme in the transport sector; points out the need for the various needs of the Member States and regions to be taken into account under the various funds and networks;
2. Emphasises that the European Structural and Investment Funds have become the main – and, in countries hit hard by the crisis, an important – source of investment, and that they are becoming not only a key instrument to eliminate transport infrastructure disparities at regional and national level in order to promote social and territorial cohesion, but also a vital lever when it comes to maintaining business and jobs in the transport and tourism sectors; underlines that the co-funding of transport infrastructure projects should be oriented towards reducing traffic accidents and minimising external costs;
3. Stresses the importance of citizens' participation, transparency and the sustainability of national general transport plans, as well as of sustainable urban mobility plans and their coordination at the national and EU levels, especially between neighbouring Member States, in the completion of cross-border transport plans and the missing cross-border sections and the establishment of a coherent vision of the development of individual modes of transport; calls on the Member States to improve coordination between their national transport plans and the TEN-T targets and deadlines; urges the Commission to bring in a specific mechanism to step up the coordination between EU planning and the national plans;
4. Stresses the need to use European Structural and Investment Funds, in synergy with the Connecting Europe Facility and the European Fund for Strategic Investments, to fill the gaps and remove the bottlenecks that exist between completed infrastructure projects and act as a brake on improving economic and social cohesion, particularly in cross-border regions and the outermost regions set out in Article 349 TFEU, including dismantled and abandoned regional rail connections (missing links); recalls that ESI Funds can be used for investment in smart mobility and intelligent transport systems (ITS), and in particular sustainable public transport in cities and regions;
5. Points out that there is a particular need to maximise the contribution of the structural funds when it comes to achieving the objectives of the EU Urban Agenda; calls on the Commission to earmark appropriate funds to support Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans and projects for sustainable, accessible, safe and intermodal public transport and transport terminals; emphasises that integrated territorial investment is important in order to build a comprehensive, energy-efficient and passenger-friendly public transport network;

6. Notes the need to provide technical, professional and practical assistance to Member States, regions and localities during applications for funding, at the planning level and during implementation of the most capital-intensive infrastructure projects, to guarantee optimum quality and costs in order to remedy the lack of expertise in Member States; observes that knowledge of the EU's funding instruments and of the associated application procedures in the Member States ought to be improved with the Commission's assistance in order that funding can be distributed on an equal footing and effectively; appreciates the impact of the Jaspers facility and reiterates that poor investment planning results in major delays in the completion of projects and in the inefficient use of funding;
7. Recalls that completion of the core TEN-T network is a European transport policy priority and that structural and investment funds are a very important tool in the implementation of this project; emphasises the need to tap the potential of the European Structural and Investment Funds to connect the potential of the core and comprehensive TEN-T networks with regional and local transport infrastructure; recognises the importance of the Cohesion Fund for improving infrastructure and connectivity in Europe and insists that this fund be maintained in the new post-2020 financial framework;
8. Calls on the Commission to take into account the main features of long-term investments in transport infrastructure; emphasises that investments in sustainable transport infrastructure require a substantial public input and might be less attractive for the private sector as they yield too low or uncertain a return on investment;
9. Recalls that funds allocated to financing the 'Connecting Europe' facility (CEF) were heavily depleted in order to recapitalise the European Fund for Strategic Investments; recalls that transport remains a top priority of the European Fund for Strategic Investments and calls for these funds to be used to finance sustainable transport infrastructure projects, with a particular focus on rail infrastructure; strongly requests that the cuts in the CEF to finance the EFSI programme be restored within the framework of the revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework; draws attention to the possibility of combining EFSI financial instruments with ESI Funds on a single project;
10. Emphasises that the multimodality of transport should be a vital factor in the assessment of infrastructure projects financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds, but that it should not be the only criterion used to assess proposed projects, especially in the case of Member States with major investment needs in the area of transport infrastructure;
11. Stresses that funding under the cohesion policy, job creation, sustainable development and the implementation of innovative technologies are exceptionally important for the construction and development of transport infrastructure in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and in other countries, particularly in Europe's less developed regions; calls for the necessary resources to be secured and for the level of financing to be maintained in the next Multiannual Financial Framework, and also for support to be maintained for the interconnection and investment projects in the modernisation of roads, railways and navigable waterways;
12. Recalls that the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Connecting Europe Facility are central to the development of maritime region transport infrastructure, particularly in the outermost regions, in order to offset the lack of maritime links between the island regions and the internal market; notes therefore the importance of ensuring

resources for the development of the motorways of the sea and maritime infrastructure;

13. Calls for increased efforts to be made with regard to cutting down on wastage and spending European Structural and Investment Funds more effectively when it comes to airport infrastructure;
14. Notes that there are major disparities in the level of development and use of inland waterway transport in the Member States; emphasises the need for the European Structural and Investment Funds to be used to bridge this gap;
15. Notes that major administrative barriers to accessing European Structural and Investment Funds exist, particularly for SMEs; underlines that excluding ESI Funds from the state aid rules will significantly facilitate access to ESI Funds for SMEs and local entrepreneurs facing major administrative barriers; stresses that the Structural and Investment Funds are of particularly great importance for the purpose of facilitating small and medium-sized local and regional infrastructure investments which are important for people's everyday lives; calls for more flexibility in the preparation of guidelines and in the assessment of completed infrastructure projects which have received funding from this source; calls for more flexibility regarding the thematic concentration establishing ESI Funds' investment priorities, taking into account the fact that such thematic concentration should not limit local authorities to investment in transport infrastructure; stresses that specific measures must be put in place to simplify the administrative formalities;
16. Stresses the need for support for the digitisation of the transport system, and in this context underlines the importance of ensuring funds for SMEs;
17. Underlines the fact that the thematic concentration establishing ESI Funds' investment priorities might limit the capacity of local authorities to invest in transport infrastructure, especially in the more developed regions where at least 80 % of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) resources at national level are to be allocated to two or more of thematic objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the Common Strategic Framework (CSF); calls therefore on the Commission to grant regions greater flexibility in deciding on which priorities they want to focus; stresses that objective 7 of the CSF, 'Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures', should be taken into account as a key action of the ERDF;
18. Takes the view that countries with economic problems find it very hard to co-finance European projects owing to the strict manner in which the Stability and Growth Pact is applied when calculating the government deficit; urges the Commission to be more flexible in assessing national investment for the co-financing of European TEN-T transport project commitments when it comes to calculating the government deficit;
19. Calls for better information and cooperation with the Member States with a view to strengthening the administrative capacity of the European Structural and Investment Funds so as to ensure that the local and national authorities managing these funds are as efficient as possible;
20. Calls for the broader inclusion of local and regional authorities, as well as of the social partners in the transport sector, in the processes of designing national general and master transport plans and allocating resources for infrastructure projects, particularly in cross-

border regions;

21. Suggests the inclusion in the European Semester of a chapter to monitor coherence between national investment in transport infrastructure and the TEN-T objectives;
22. Takes the view that indicators should be found that will guarantee the fair distribution of European funds while also taking account of specific territorial needs; points out that more efficient transport development can be achieved only through European territorial cooperation and the smart distribution of funds.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	11.10.2016
Result of final vote	+: 40 -: 4 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Daniela Aiuto, Lucy Anderson, Marie-Christine Arnautu, Inés Ayala Sender, Georges Bach, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Deirdre Clune, Michael Cramer, Luis de Grandes Pascual, Andor Deli, Karima Delli, Isabella De Monte, Jacqueline Foster, Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, Merja Kyllönen, Miltiadis Kyrkos, Bogusław Liberadzki, Peter Lundgren, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Georg Mayer, Gesine Meissner, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Renaud Muselier, Markus Pieper, Salvatore Domenico Pogliese, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Gabriele Preuß, Christine Revault D'Allonnes Bonnefoy, Dominique Riquet, Massimiliano Salini, David-Maria Sassoli, Claudia Schmidt, Jill Seymour, Claudia Țapardel, Keith Taylor, Pavel Telička, Wim van de Camp, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Roberts Zīle, Kosma Złotowski, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska
Substitutes present for the final vote	Knut Fleckenstein, Maria Grapini
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Olle Ludvigsson